BRANDON SANDERSON

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

ALLOMANCER JAK AND THE PITS OF ELTANIA

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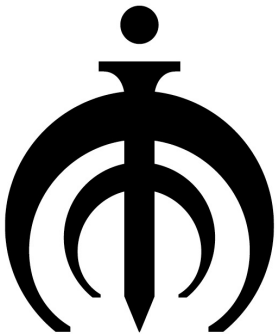

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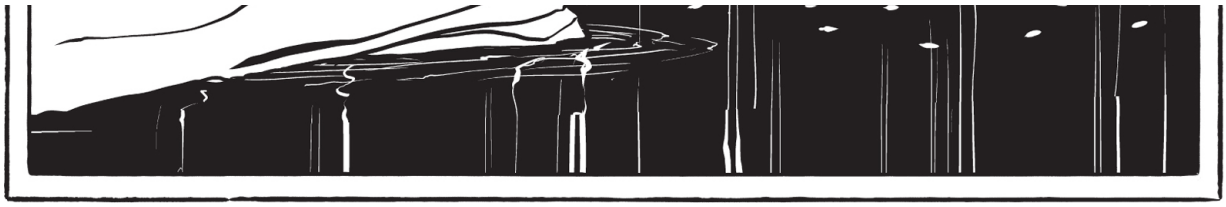
Edited and annotated by Handerwym, Jak's own faithful Terris steward!

This story contains minor spoilers for *The Alloy of Law.*



I BEGIN this week's letter as I awake to a mighty headache.

Truly, dear readers, this pain was incredible—and the effect was a din inside my mind not unlike that of a hundred rifles firing. I groaned and rolled to my knees in the darkened chamber; my face had been resting upon cold rock. My vision shook and took time to recover.

What had happened to me? I remembered my contest with the koloss challenger—a brute sized like a steamrail engine, with strength to match. I had defeated him with a bullet through the eye, had I not? Had I not in so doing maintained the loyalty of the entire koloss clan?*

I climbed to my feet and felt gingerly at the back of my head. There, I found dried blood. Fear not, for the wound was not terrible. Surely I had weathered far worse. This was not nearly as bad as when I had found myself sinking in the ocean, my arms bound, my feet tied to a metal bust of the Survivor as I sank.†

The arid air and whistling sound of the wind through broken rock indicated I was still in the Roughs, which was good. These lands of adventure and danger are my natural habitat, and I thrive upon the challenge they provide. If I were to spend too long in the safe and mundane environment of milky Elendel, I fear I would wilt away.

My enclosure was a natural cavern of some sort, with rough stone walls and drooping stalactites on the ceiling. The cavern was

shallow, however, and I found that it ended only a few feet back from my initial position. I would not be escaping in that direction, then.*

Cautious of potential gunfire, I edged to the front of the cavern and looked out. As I had guessed from the slight chill to the air, I was elevated. My cavern was on the wall of a small canyon, and the mouth opened only to a steep drop onto a group of rounded rocks far below.

Across from me, atop the ridge on the other side of the canyon, a group of blue figures watched my cavern. The hulking koloss were older ones, their skin stretched and broken, their bodies tattooed and draped with leather created from the skin of the men they had slain and eaten.†

"Why have you stranded me here, dread beasts?" I shouted at them, my voice echoing in the canyon. "And what have you done with the fair Elizandra Dramali? If you have harmed one hair upon her ever-beauteous scalp, you shall know the fury of an Allomancer enraged!"

The savages offered me no reply. They sat around their smoldering fire, and did not even turn in my direction.

Perhaps my situation was not as ideal as I had decided upon my first assessment. The canyon wall outside my cavern was as slick as glass and was as steep as the price of whiskey at Marlie's waystop. I surely could not survive an attempt to climb down, not dizzy as I was from the wound.

But neither could I simply wait. Miss Dramali, my dear Elizandra, might surely be in danger. Curse that woman and her headstrong ways; she should have remained at camp as instructed. I had no idea what might have happened to her, nor to faithful Handerwym.* The koloss would not dare harm him, because of their vow to the Terris people,† but surely he feared for my safety.

I gave little thought to how I had reached this dire location. I needed metal. My system was clean of it; I had burned the last to steady my hands and eyes as I took the perfect shot at the koloss challenger to my throne. Unfortunately, my captors had stolen Glint —brutes though they are, the koloss are wise enough to take the

guns from a man, particularly after seeing my skill with my trusty sidearm. They had also taken my vials of metal. Perhaps they wanted to see if those contained whiskey. Some Roughs Allomancers do store their metals in such solutions, but I have always abstained from the process. The mind of a gentleman adventurer needs to retain clarity at all times.‡

Surely the hidden pouch of tin in the heel of my boot would serve me. By misfortune, however, the heel's hidden compartment seemed to have been knocked open during my initial scuffle with the koloss champion. I had lost the pouch! I made a note to myself to speak with Ranette about her heel contraption and its tendency to open unexpectedly.

Disaster! An Allomancer without metal. I was left with only my own wits as a tool. Those—though of no small measure—might not be enough. Who knew what kind of trouble the fair Elizandra might be in at this point?

Determined, I began to feel about the cavern. It was an unlikely chance, but we were in highlands prized precisely because of their keen mining opportunities. Indeed, the Survivor favored me this day, for I located a small glimmering strain of metal along the far wall. Almost invisible, I discovered it only by touch.* In the dim cavern I could not judge the metal's full nature, but I had no other options.

Now, I have found from my infrequent trips to Elendel that I am regarded with a somewhat heroic reputation. I must assure you, good readers, that I am but a humble adventurer, not deserving of an unduly idolized status. That said, while I have never wished for glory,† I do value my reputation. Therefore, if I could remove from your memories the image of this next part of my narrative, I would do so.

However, it has ever been my goal to present to you a sincere and unexpurgated account of my travels in the Roughs. Honesty is my greatest virtue.‡ And so, I offer you the truth of what needed to happen next.

I knelt down and began to lick the wall.

I would not ever wish to look foolish before you, dear readers.§ But in order to survive in the Roughs, a man must be willing to seize opportunity. I did so. With my tongue.

This activity gave me very little tin to burn, but it was enough for a few moments of enhanced senses.¶ I used them to listen with care for some clue as to how I might escape this situation.

I heard two things with my tin-enhanced ears. The first was the tinkling of water. I peeked out of my cavern and saw that the rocks below hid a small stream I had not seen earlier. The other thing I heard was a strange scratching, like that of claws on a branch.

I looked up, hopeful, and there found a crow perched among a sprout of weeds growing from the rocky wall. Could it be?

"Well done!" the crow exclaimed to me in her inhuman voice. "You have found metal even in your prison, Jak. The Survivor is pleased by your ingenuity."

It *was* her. Lyndip, my spirit guide, sent by the Survivor to me during my most difficult times of trial.* I have long suspected her to be one of the Faceless Immortals,† as the legends speak of them being able to change forms and take the bodies of animals.

"Lyndip!" I exclaimed. "Is Miss Dramali well? The koloss have not harmed her?"

"They have not, bold adventurer," Lyndip said. "But she is captured by them and is being held. You must escape, and quickly, for a dire fate awaits her."

"But how am I to escape!"

"I cannot give you the method," Lyndip said. "I am a guide, but I cannot solve a hero's problems for him. It is not the way of the Survivor, who deems that all men must make their own way."‡

"Very well," I said. "But tell me, guide: Why was I taken captive again? Had I not earned the loyalty of the koloss clan; was I not their king? I defeated the challenger!"

I am certain my frustration shone through, and I hope you do not think less of me—dear reader—to see such harsh words spoken to my spirit guide. However, I was not only concerned for the safety of my dear Elizandra, but was also devastated to lose the loyalty of this

tribe of koloss. Savages though they are, they had seemed close to revealing their secrets to me—secrets I was certain would lead me to the symbol of the spearhead, the bloody footprints, and the Survivor's Treasure.

"I do not know for certain," Lyndip said, "but I suspect it was because you used a gun to kill the challenger. Previously, in winning the loyalty of the clan, you did not shoot your rival but frightened him off with the placement of your bullet. Many koloss clans see killing at a distance with guns to be a sign of weakness, not strength."

Ruthless beasts—savages indeed.* The gun is the most elegant of weapons, the weapon of a gentleman.

"I *must* escape and rescue the fair Elizandra," I said. "Guide, did you see how I reached this cavern prison? Do the koloss have a secret passage somewhere, and did they bring me up here by that method?"

"I saw, adventuresome one," Lyndip said. "But the truth is not what you will wish to hear. There was no secret passage—instead, you were *thrown* up here by some koloss below."†

"Rust and Ruin!" I exclaimed. Undoubtedly, the beasts—afraid of the powerful weapons I had used—had placed me here to die of starvation, rather than risking the anger of their gods by killing me with their own hands.

I needed a way out, and quickly. I looked out again, and noticed storm clouds in the near distance. This started me thinking. I glanced down at the trickle of water in the canyon floor below. As I had noticed, the sides of this canyon were particularly smooth. As if … weathered.

Yes! I spotted distinctive lines on the canyon walls—water lines, from when the river ran bold and deep. My avenue of escape was soon to come! Indeed, the rains dumped on the plains upstream, and water soon surged into the canyon and—propelled by the narrower confines here—the river began to swell.

I waited nervously for the right moment to enter the river, and in my waiting, found time despite my anxiety to pen this letter to you. I sealed it in the special, water-proof pocket of my rugged trousers

with the hope that if I should meet my end, it would find its way to you somehow once my body was found.

As rain began to fall on the canyon itself, I could wait no longer. I hurled myself into the risen waters below.‡

My readers, I trust this message finds you well. As you may recall, last week's missive ended with a dangerous leap on my part toward a watery doom. I was certain that my time had come, but I am somewhat pleased to say that I have survived. Only "somewhat" because of the revelation that I must soon impart unto you. If you must read on, be warned: The contents of this letter are dreadful, and might produce discomfort—even sickness—in the more frail and youthful among you.

I did leap from my cavern prison into the rising waters of the river. I must severely advise my readers against this kind of activity unless presented with the most dire of circumstances. The waters of a Roughs-style flash flood are dangerous, full of eddies and deadly rocks. If I had been presented with any other option, I surely would have taken it.

The waters churned around me like a stampede. Fortunately, I had experience with surviving waters of this nature.*

The key to swimming in waters such as these is to not fight. One must travel with the current, as a ship allows the sea to pull it. Still, even keeping afloat in such a tempest requires practice, luck, and force of will.

With strength of arm, I managed to steer myself around the most deadly of rocks and survive as the waters of my small tributary merged with the greater waters of the Rancid, the greatest river of the area. Here, the larger amount of water caused slower currents, and I managed with some difficulty to swim to the shore and pull myself free.

Exhausted, still dizzy from my wound, I flopped to the bank of the river. No sooner was I free, however, than a set of strong arms hauled me into the air.

Koloss. I had been captured again.

The beasts hauled me, sopping wet, away from the roaring river. I left a trail of water in the dust.[*] I did not fight against my captors. There were six of them, medium-sized koloss, their blue skin starting to pull tight across their bodies, ripping at the sides of the mouths and around the largest of muscles.

They did not speak to me in their brutal tongue, and I knew I could not defeat six at once. Not without my guns and without metal. I deemed it better to let them drag me where they wished. Perhaps I would be placed back in my cavern prison.

Instead, the koloss carted me toward an incongruous stand of trees, hidden within a small valley of rocks. I had never come to this location before—indeed, the koloss had always steered me away from this area, claiming that it was a wasteland. From whence, then, did come the trees?[†]

The trees hid a small oasis in the dusty ground, a place where water welled up in a natural spring. I found this curious, as prime watering holes are usually marked on my maps.

They drug me past the trees and around the watering hole, and I saw that it was very deep—so deep that the depths were blue, and I could not make out a bottom. The sides were all of stone. And, with a start, I realized that the pool was shaped vaguely like a spearhead.

Could this be it? The location of the Survivor's Treasure? Had I found it at long last?[‡] I looked for the other sign, that of the bloody footprints spoken of in the legends. I did not see them until my wet form was dragged across the stones nearest to the pool.

If you travel long in the Roughs, you will find that water sometimes reveals the true color of stone. This is not so much the case in the city where many of you live, dear readers, as the stones are coated in grime and soot. But here, the land is clean and fresh. The water my body dripped on the stones revealed a pattern in the rock not unlike that of a set of footprints leading into the oasis pool.

This was it! Though not true footprints, I could see how a weary traveler—reaching this location—might mistake them for such. The invented story of the Survivor himself—bleeding from his spear wound and stopping here to drink—made sense.

The place was accoutred with koloss tattoo designs traced on the rocks and had their leatherwork wrapping some of the tree trunks. This was obviously a holy place for them, which explained both the reason I had never heard of this oasis, and the reason men had vanished in this area. Any who stumbled across this spot were murdered for having witnessed what they should not.

What did it say for my future that they had brought me here?*

There were more koloss here, of course. Some were so ancient that they had burst their skin completely; these sat wrapped in leather to contain the slow seeping of blood from their flesh. If you have never seen a koloss ancient, consider yourself lucky. Their immensity of size is only matched by the strangeness of their features, lacking noses or lips, their eyes bulging from faces of red flesh. Most koloss die of heart attacks before reaching this state. These would continue to grow, even after losing their skin, until that fate claimed them.

In ancient times, ones such as these would be killed. In modern days, however, elderly koloss are revered—or so I had learned, but only through stories.† I suspect that the locations where all tribes keep their elders are as holy as this one.

My guards deposited me before the ancients. I climbed to my knees, wary.

“You have come,” said one of the ancients.

“You are not human,” another said.

“You have bested our leader and killed all challengers,” said the third.

“What will you do with me?” I demanded, forcing myself to my feet. Sodden and dazed though I was, I would meet my fate head-on.*

“You will be killed,” one said.

“It will be according to the will of the daughter of the one who challenged you,” said another.

“You must join us,” said another.

“Join you?” I demanded. “How?”

“All koloss were once human,” said one of the ancients.

I had heard such statements before. And, dear readers, I realize that I disparaged them to you. I considered them silly and fanciful.

It is with a heavy heart that I must tell you that I was wrong. So very wrong. I have since learned the terrible truth. The ancients are right.

Koloss are people.

The process is terrible. To initiate a man into their ranks, they take him and pin him with small spikes of metal. This creates a mystical transformation, during which the man's mind and identity are savagely weakened. In the end, the person becomes as dull and simple as the koloss.

Koloss are not born. Koloss are made. Their barbarity exists inside of all of us. Perhaps this was what dear Handerwym was trying to tell me.†

They said that I had to join them. Was this to be my final end? To live my life as a brute in a distant village, my mind lost?‡

"You spoke of the daughter of the one who challenged me," I said. "Who is this?"

"Me," said a soft, familiar voice.

I turned and found Elizandra Dramali emerging from behind some trees nearby. She no longer wore her dress, and instead was wrapped in leathers that only *just* covered up her most intimate parts. Indeed, a full description of her figure would be too shocking for my more sensitive readers, and so I will forbear.*

She still wore her spectacles, and her golden hair was pulled back into its customary tail, but her skin … her skin was now a shade of blue, such as I had never before seen.

Elizandra, fair Elizandra, was *koloss-blooded.*†

"This can't be!" I exclaimed, staring at my beautiful Elizandra. The woman I had grown to love and cherish above all others. The woman who had somehow hidden her true nature from me all this time.

Elizandra was koloss-blooded.

I wish I did not have to write these words to you, my stalwart readers. But they are true, true as my poor heart bleeds. True as the ink on this page.

“Makeup,” Elizandra said, demure eyes downcast. “As you can see, the blue cast to my skin is light, compared to some koloss-blooded. Clever use of powders and gloves have allowed me to hide what I am.”

“But your mind!” I said, stepping toward her. “You think and have wit, unlike these beasts!”‡

I moved to reach toward her, but hesitated. Everything I knew about this woman was a lie. She was a monster. Not my fair, wonderful noblewoman, but a creature of the wilds, a murderer and a savage.

“Jak,” she said. “I am still me. I was born to koloss, but have not accepted the transformation. My mind is as keen as that of any human. Please, my dear one, see past this skin and look into my heart.”§

I could resist no longer. She might have lied, but she was still my Elizandra. I stepped into her embrace, and felt her sweet warmth in this time of confusion.

“You are in grave danger, loved one,” she whispered into my ear. “They will make you one of them.”

“Why?”

“You frightened away their chief,” Elizandra whispered. “And ruled the clan despite the challenges we provided. Finally, you killed their greatest champion. My mother.”

“The champion was a *woman*?” I asked.

“Of course. Didn’t you notice?”

I glanced at the gathered koloss, who wore loincloths, but generally no tops. If there was a way to distinguish the males from the females other than … ahem … peeking, I did not know it. In fact, I’d rather not have known that some of them were women. My crusty, wind-weathered cheeks did no longer often blush, for the things I’ve seen would rub your delicate minds raw. But if I’d been capable of a blush, I might have given one at that moment.

“I am sorry, then, for killing her,” I said, looking back to Elizandra, who still held me.

“She chose her own course in life,” Elizandra said. “And it was one of brutality and murder. I do not mourn her, but I will mourn you, should you be taken into their embrace, dear one. They speak of this being my will, but it is certainly not, though they will not listen to my protests.”*

“Why did they lock me away to die in that cavern?” I asked.

“It was a test,” Elizandra said. “A final challenge. They would have freed you after three days, if you had not escaped—but as you managed to, you have proven worthy to join their ranks and become their new chief in full. But to do so, you must undergo the transformation! You will lose most of your self, instead becoming one of them, a creature of instinct.”†

I had to escape, then. This fate would be worse than death—it would be a death of the mind. Though I have gained a great respect for the koloss savages,* I had no intention of ever joining them.

“You steered me here,” I realized, looking toward Elizandra. “Ever since we found you in these Roughs, you have been guiding me toward this tribe. You knew of this pool.”

“I suspected, from your descriptions of what you sought, this was the location of the treasure,” said my fairest one. “But I did not know for certain. I had never been to the holy pool. Jak … once they transform you, they plan to do the same to me, against my will. I have resisted this all of my life. I would not let them take my mind as a youth—I will not allow it now!”

“Enough talk!” said one of the elders. “You will be transformed!”

The other koloss began to clap in unison. One of the ancients reached out a trembling, bloody hand, holding in his palm a handful of small spikes.

“No!” I exclaimed. “There is no need! For I am *already* one of you!”

Elizandra’s hand tightened on my arm. “What?” she whispered.

“It is the only plan I can think of,” I whispered back. Then, more loudly, I proclaimed. “I am koloss!”

“Not possible,” said one of the ancients.

“You are not blue,” said another.

“You have not the way,” said the third.

“I slew your champion!” I declared. “What more proof do you need! Would an ordinary human be strong enough to do this?”

“Gun,” said one of the ancients. “It takes not strength to use the gun.”

Rust and Ruin! “Well then,” I declared, “I will prove it in a final test. For I will bring you the treasure of the Survivor!”

The koloss grew silent. Their clapping stopped.

“Not possible,” said one of the ancients. “Even strongest koloss have failed.”

“Then if I succeed, you will know I have told the truth,” I said to the beasts.

I was setting myself up for certain death. I wish I could tell you that bravery steered my lips that day, but it was truly just desperation. I spoke of the only thing that occurred to me, the only thing that would let me delay.

If the legends were true, then the treasure was hidden “opposite the sky, raised only by life itself.” Opposite the sky must mean at the bottom of the pool—so far down, I could not see it. I would have to dive in and recover the treasure.

“Not possible,” said another ancient.

“I will prove it possible!” I declared.

“Jak!” Elizandra said, hand on my arm. “You’re a fool!”

“A fool I might be,” I said, “but I will not let them take me to be a koloss.”

She pulled me to her, suddenly, and kissed me. Very little in life shocks me, dear readers, but that moment achieved the impossible. She had been so cold toward me at times that I was certain my affection would go unrequited.

But this kiss … this *kiss*! As deep as the pool beside us, as true as the Survivor’s own teachings. As powerful as a bullet in flight, and as incredible as a bull’s-eye at three hundred yards. The passion in it warmed me, casting off the chill of my sodden clothing and the fear of a trembling heart.

When she finished, metal flared to life inside of me. Though not an Allomancer, she’d poured some tin dust in her mouth, passing it

to me in the kiss!

I pulled back, marveling. “You’re amazing,” I whispered.

“Well damn, Jak,” she whispered back. “You’ve finally gone and said something smart, for once.”*

The koloss started to clap again. I picked the largest rock I could carry, then—taking a deep breath—leaped into the pool and allowed the rock to pull me downward.

It was deep. Unfathomably deep.*

The darkness soon swallowed me. Dear readers, you must imagine this complete darkness, for I do not believe I can do it justice. To be consumed by the blackness is itself a remarkable experience, but to be in the waters as light flees … there is something incredibly horrifying about such an experience. Even my steel nerves gave way to trembling as my descent continued.

A terrible pain struck my ears, though whether this was from my wound, I know not. I dropped for what seemed like forever, until my lungs were burning, my mind growing numb. I nearly let go of my rock.

I could not think. My wound threatened to overwhelm me, and though I could not see, I knew that my vision was growing cloudy. My body was failing me as I plummeted toward unconsciousness. I knew that I would die in these unseen depths.

At that moment, I thought of Elizandra being turned into a koloss, losing the beautiful wit that so charmed me. This thought gave me strength, and I flared my tin.

Flared tin brings clarity of mind, as I have said before. I have never welcomed it as much as I did then; those moments of lucidity forced away the shadow upon my mind.

I felt the coldness of the water, and the pain in my head seemed incredible, but I was *alive.*

I hit the bottom. Not daring to release my rock weight, I felt about me with one hand, frantic. My lungs burned like flared metals. Was it here?

Yes! It was. Something square and unnatural, a box of metal. A strongbox?

I tried to lift it, and managed to make it budge, but it was as heavy as my rock. With dismay, I realized that I could never carry this up to the surface. My body was too weak; swimming with such a weight was more than I could accomplish.

Was I to fail, then? If I reached the surface without the treasure, perhaps they would simply kill me, or perhaps they would make me like them—either way I would be finished.

I worked again to lift the box, but could swim only a few feet. I had no air, no strength. It was useless!

And then, I remembered the poem. Opposite the sky you shall find it, and it shall be raised only by life itself.*

Life itself. What was life down here?

Air.

I fumbled at the sides of the box and found a latch, which released some kind of object. It felt leathery, like a waterskin. I breathed into it, giving up all of the air in my lungs, air which no longer sustained me—but which might still serve me.† Then, I kicked off of the bottom, my metal spent, my air expended.

Eternity.

I burst from the surface of the pool as my vision clouded again. I saw only a moment of light before darkness snatched me back, but soft hands grabbed me and hauled me free of the water before I could sink to my doom. I smelled Elizandra's perfume, and recovered to the sight of her concerned face, cradling my head in her lap. The view of her leather costume from beneath was not particularly proper, but also not unappreciated.

"You fool," she whispered as I rolled over and coughed water from my lungs.

"He has failed!" exclaimed the koloss elders.

At that very moment, something bobbed to the surface of the pool—it appeared to be an inflated bladder of some sort, perhaps from a sheep. I reached into the water and grabbed the strongbox that floated underneath.*

The koloss crowded around as I knelt beside the box and worked at the lock. Elizandra produced the key we had found in Maelstrom's

mine, and it fitted[†] exactly. I turned it with a click, and opened the top.

Inside were spikes.

The koloss shouts first worried me, but they turned out to be shouts of joy. I looked to Elizandra, confused.

“New spikes,” she said. “Many of them. With these, the tribe can grow. They were losing the wars with those nearby; my tribe has always been the smallest of those in the area. This will grow them by the dozens. It is a true treasure to them.”

I sat back on my heels. I will express some regret to you, dear readers. I travel not for wealth, but for the joy of discovery and the opportunity to share the world with you—but still, this was not the treasure I had hoped to discover. A handful of small spikes? This was what I had searched for months upon months to find? This was the fabled wealth left by the Survivor himself?

“Do not look so morose, dear one,” Elizandra said, dumping the spikes for the ancients to take. She pulled back with me as they gathered around. It appeared that the two of us had been forgotten in the excitement. “It seems we have our lives restored to us.”

Indeed, the koloss did not stop us as we fled. We quickly left the small oasis valley, making toward the river and—hopefully—the rest of our caravan.[‡]

I still found myself disappointed. It was then that I noticed something. The box Elizandra carried hadn’t tarnished much from what had undoubtedly been over three centuries spent under the waters. I gestured for her to hand it to me, and I buffed at the surface of the lid. Then, I blinked in surprise.

“What?” she asked, stopping in the path.

I grinned. “Pure aluminum, my dear—worth thousands. We have found our treasure after all.”

She laughed and favored me with another kiss.

And it is here, my readers, that I must end the account of my travels in the Pits of Eltania. The treasure found, our lives lost—and then recovered—I had fulfilled the dying wish of dear, fallen Mikaff.

It was my grandest adventure yet, and I believe I will rest for a short time before striking out again. I have been hearing of strange lights in the southern skies that can only hide another mystery.

Until then, adventure on![*]

POSTSCRIPT

This is the second of the stories I wrote for Crafty Games, this one to be published in their *Alloy of Law* supplement.

I took a different direction on this story. Since I'd done the first one as more of a showpiece to new readers, I wanted this one to be something deep and interesting for established readers. Revealing how the koloss are made and exist in the second era of Scadrial's sequence seemed the kind of secret that would be intriguing to people.

Many years ago, my brother Jordan came to me wanting to do a radio drama as a podcast. He wanted it to be scripted, written by me—but I just didn't have time. (Writing Excuses was born out of this, though I believe he eventually went to Dan Wells to do some episodes of something more scripted.) He pitched it as the story of an old-time adventurer/explorer. Though I couldn't do the piece, I did spend years thinking about what I might have done, had I had the time.

Allomancer Jak is a direct response to this. The gentleman adventurer, over the top, based off old pulp stories. Writing only that, however, seemed like it wouldn't work. In the Wax and Wayne books, I was already telling stories that were a more authentic evolution of pulp stories, with more solid characterization and less melodrama.

Jak, then, had to be about contrast—a way to highlight the old against the new. Whether he is actually the blowhard that his "faithful steward" implies he is, or whether he's more of a quixotic adventurer with boundless optimism, he is supposed to present a certain level of

inauthenticity. A contrast to Wax, in the way that you might contrast the newer incarnations of Batman with the old Adam West Batman. (Note that I love both.)

As an aside, writing Handerwym's annotations was one of the most amusing things I've ever done as a writer.

BY BRANDON SANDERSON

THE STORMLIGHT ARCHIVE

The Way of Kings

Words of Radiance

THE MISTBORN SAGA

THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

Mistborn

The Well of Ascension

The Hero of Ages

THE WAX AND WAYNE SERIES

The Alloy of Law

Shadows of Self

The Bands of Mourning

Elantris

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The Rithmatist

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Alcatraz vs. the Evil Librarians

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The Knights of Crystallia

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The Dark Talent

THE RECKONERS

Steelheart

Firefight

Calamity

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BRANDON SANDERSON grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska. He lives in Utah with his wife and children and teaches creative writing at Brigham Young University. He is the author of such bestsellers as the Mistborn® trilogy and its sequels, *The Alloy of Law*, *Shadows of Self,* and *The Bands of Mourning;* The Stormlight Archive novels *The Way of Kings* and *Words of Radiance;* and other novels, including *The Rithmatist* and *Steelheart*. In 2013, he won a Hugo Award for Best Novella for *The Emperor's Soul,* set in the world of his acclaimed first novel, *Elantris*. Additionally, he was chosen to complete Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time® sequence. For behind-the-scenes information on all of Brandon Sanderson's books, visit brandonsanderson.com, or sign up for email updates here.

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* Indeed, this was the outcome of Jak's brave—perhaps foolhardy—plan. See episode twenty-six. At this point, Jak had been "king" of the koloss for three episodes, and had survived the latest of challenges to his authority, getting closer to the secrets they held regarding the Survivor's Treasure.

† See “Allomancer Jak and the Mask of Ages,” episode fourteen. There, however, Jak writes that it was a bust of the Lord Mistborn. One wonders if Jak ever stops to read his accounts after their publication. Fortunately for me, he does not seem to.

* One might wonder why Jak felt he needed to escape, as he had not discovered if he was imprisoned, and had not yet tried walking out through the front of the cavern. If you have this concern, might I remind you of the last *eighteen times* Jak awoke with a headache at the beginning of an episode? Each time, he had been captured in some fashion.

† Jak is completely, blissfully unaware of modern scholarship regarding the koloss, which indicates that they rarely (if ever) use actual human skin for their trophies. Indeed, accounts of them eating humans are greatly exaggerated.

* I was actually asleep. It had been a very long day. I'm sure I'd have worried about him if it had crossed my mind to do so. The bed the koloss provided, however, was surprisingly comfortable.

† See episode twenty-five for our discovery of their vow not to harm the Terris, and their explanation for the respect they have paid me during our adventures. It is a matter which I have regarded with some interest.

‡ Didn’t he just mention the whiskey he often drinks at the waystop? Perhaps the dens of thieves do not count as a place where a clear mind is required.

* Yes, according to the way he wrote that sentence, he turned invisible for one line. No, he won’t let me change it.

† Uh …

‡ Technically, this is probably true.

§ Well, it was too late for that after volume one….

¶ I will admit to a healthy skepticism about Jak's wall-licking episode. My research indicates that one is highly unlikely to find pure tin exposed in this way inside of a natural cave formation. Even cassiterite, a tin ore of some relevance, would be unlikely in this area—and that might be too Allomantically impure to produce an effect. But Jak *is* being truthful about having lost his pouch of tin. I found it on the ground of the camp following his second capture, full and unopened.

* See episode seven of this narrative for Lyndip's most recent appearance. I will repeat what I said there: I did not see, nor have I ever seen, this supposed talking bird and cannot confirm her existence.

† Never mind that the Faceless Immortals are a mythological feature of the Path, not Survivorism. This theological mixup has never bothered Jak.

‡ I suspect Jak was hallucinating through this entire section, a result of the trauma to his head. Upon doing this edit, I wished several times to be similarly afflicted.

* I once mentioned to Jak that my people, the Terris, were at one time considered savages —at least according to the records given us by Harmony. He put a hand on my shoulder and said, “It is all right. I am proud to count a savage as my friend.” He was so sincere, I dared not explain just how insulting he was being.

† I find this strains plausibility, even for a Jak story. More likely, the koloss lowered him from above.

‡ This marks the conclusion of this episode and the beginning of the next—and no, I don't know how he wrote the last paragraph after sealing the letter in his trousers. Regardless, I doubt you think this is Jak's demise, considering this collected volume contains three episodes of which this is only the first. However, many of the weekly broadsheet readers of his letters did indeed worry that this was the end of Jak. Just as they worried at the end of the other three hundred episodes. It often strikes me that I wish I could find these people and discover to whom they sold the contents of their skulls, and for how much. I personally much prefer the audience of the *bound* volumes, such as this one. Their keen regard for my personal annotations proves them to be of a superior taste and intellect.

* See “Allomancer Jak and the Waters of Dread” for several equally implausible instances of Jak swimming strong currents and whitewater rapids. I am left to wonder why these extreme events never happen in my presence.

* I am not sure what happened to the rain that was so instrumental in his escape last episode. He doesn't mention it again.

† An unnecessary “from” is the least of Jak’s problems, so I left it. I did manage to snip sixteen superfluous commas from this page. Jak is also under the impression that *koloss* looks better with an exclamation point in the center, and I have yet to ascertain the reason. For my own sanity, I have removed these, though I worry it has come too late.

‡ Yup.

* As fanciful as Jak's description of this place sounds, I have seen it myself, and must second his description. The patterns do look like footprints, and the pool appears to have the shape of a spearhead. The koloss do not speak of it to anyone. Incredible as it seems, he actually found the location of the Survivor's Treasure. I take this as proof that Harmony watches over all of us, for only deity could have such a cruel sense of humor as to repeatedly allow a man like Jak to bumble into such remarkable success.

† For this revelation, see episode twenty-five of this narrative.

* Or, in other words, “I couldn’t escape immediately, but I wanted to be ready to run screaming like a child as soon as I had the opportunity. So I stood up.”

† Well, no. But I'll accept it. Please note that what Jak is saying here is, unfortunately, true. I have seen the process with my own eyes, as have other scholars, and it is widely accepted that this description of the practice is true. I did try to explain this to Jak on several occasions.

‡ Not sure if this is possible. It would be much like dividing by a null set.

* This, of course, did not stop the newspaper editors from including a detailed sketch of this scene in their original printing of the episode.

† The original printing of this story ended the penultimate episode right here, which—I am told—nearly caused riots and prompted a special broadsheet the next day, containing the conclusion of the story. Fortunately, we had sent in all three of these episodes together, in a single pouch. It is a constant source of amazement to me that people are so interested in Jak's raw accounts, rather than waiting for my more sensible, annotated edition. This lack of taste upon the part of the general public is one of the very reasons I left Elendel to travel the Roughs in the first place. It was either that or shoot myself, and my oaths of a steward's pacifism forbid me from shedding blood.

‡ Studies have proven that koloss-blooded individuals are, on average, no less intelligent than ordinary humans—though obviously this is not true for full koloss who have accepted the transformation. Or for most adventurers.

§ I showed this scene to Elizandra, and her response was laughter. Take that as you wish. I would make note, however, that when *I* have spoken to her of this, she has not seemed nearly so ashamed of her heritage, though she did hide it from us all at first.

* More laughter here. If you know Zandra, you'd probably realize that any statement that lacks three curses—and a comment about Jak's questionable parentage—cannot truly be attributed to her. But she *does* seem to be fond of him. For some reason.

† For those confused—which includes Jak—this really is the way that one becomes a full koloss. Their children are born with skin that ranges from blue to mottled grey, but not the deep blue of true koloss. These children are generally human, though they have some generous endowments of physical capability. Each child is offered the choice to make the final transformation when they reach their twelfth year. Those who do not accept the transformation must leave and join human society. By my estimation, many do leave—but just as many ordinary humans, dissatisfied with their lives in the cities, make their way to the koloss tribes and join them, accepting the transformation. From there, no distinguishing is made between those who were originally humans or koloss-blooded.

* Not enough respect to refrain from calling them savages, of course.

* I believe that this is the only accurate quote from Elizandra in the entire story. She confided in me she threatened to shoot him in the … ahem … masculine identity if he didn't include it in the official narrative.

* And by that he means precisely 18.3 fathoms. I went back and measured.

* Yes, I am aware that he has quoted this poem six different times through the course of this narrative, and has said it a little differently each time. No, he will not allow me to change them and make them consistent.

† Those readers with a knowledge of buoyancy and pressure should probably stop here, as opposed to working out the mathematics of what a single lungful of air could manage under these circumstances.

* If a bag of air was all that was needed to raise the treasure, one wonders why the grandest of all windbags himself needed the aforementioned sheep’s bladder.

† Sigh.

‡ Yes, they forgot about me.

* And so, we come to the end of another annotated volume. I'm certain that discerning readers of elegance and respectability will appreciate my long-suffering efforts in keeping Jak alive, if only because I suspect these edited accounts provide them with an individual blend of amusement on long winter evenings. I bid you farewell, then. Jak promises further adventure and mystery, but I make a more humble promise. I'm going to try to get him to use proper punctuation in his letters for once in his life. I believe my task to be the more difficult of the two, by far.

Handerwym of Inner Terris
The 17th of Hammondar, 341

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